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JENNY LIND.

Of all the female vocalists that ever trod the lyrical stage, Jenny Lind may, more than any other, be entitled European. Such is the eagerness to behold—such is the contention for her possession, that every journal of Europe has been filled with her name for six months past; and yet, singular to relate—for the fact is, perhaps, beyond all precedent—not one of the myriad critics that have mooted the subject have uttered a syllable in disparagement, much less of sarcasm, as regards the estimate held of her surpassing talents. She appears to hold the supremacy of song by a totally different tenure from that of any other *prima donna.* Yet, by her genius alone, her vast superiority is not to be explained—it is that in private life, apart from the illusion of the stage and its conventionality, that this young and artless lady shines with a lustre no borrowed light, no theatrical radiance, could

confer. It is her intrinsic worth of heart and delicacy of mind; it is in her pure and intense feelings that abide her potency, and which impart to her natural powers of voice and her acquired science, dramatic and musical, an effulgence eclipsing every other development of merely studied art. A great and noble simplicity, combined with an ardent imagination—a love of nature, refined by poetry of feeling, pervades her whole being; and those who have beheld her on the stage, and have seen her in private life, divested of many of those external attractions in which consist the attractions of ordinary women, are astonished to find that there, unadorned, she most rivets their admiration. Jenny Lind possesses friends of all ages, and the most exalted in rank are amongst her most devoted admirers. In Jenny Lind is typified the great improvement of the *morale* of the stage. There was a time when actors and actresses, in the eye of the law, were mere vagrants—Moliére himself was refused the rites of sepulture, and all that even the most absolute of monarchs could procure for him was a burial by stealth in the middle of the night. *Prime donne* were but a short period since characterised by eccentricity of habits and violence of tempers. Since the lyrical stage has demanded a rare combination of various talents—since true genius, possessing them, has found so readily its place and its reward on the operatic boards, the moral improvement of its interpreters has been constant. The profession may now boast of some few actors and actresses who, amidst temptations difficult to be withstood, may be deemed worthy models of conduct in domestic life, who preserve even there their dramatic superiority—they are the kings

and queens by right of nature in private, as they are by costume on the boards of the theatre.

Those two extremes as regards outward form—the slight, maidenly Jenny Lind, and the massive, stalwart Lablache, may be justly considered as examples of an infinite mental superiority and the utmost delicacy of feeling, united to an originality of genius, as charming in the daily intercourse of life as it is striking in the fictive scenes of the poet. When we first beheld Jenny Lind we were unconscious of her presence. She was seated in the angle of a projecting window, working at a tambour frame, and totally absorbed in her task. Her pale flaxen hair, her light greyish blue eyes, and placid features seemed to point out some humble needlewoman. Impatient with waiting, we asked when Madlle. Lind would be visible. The needlewoman rose, and in the arch, although *naive* smile that lighted up her countenance—in the deep thought that beamed in her eyes, her identity was proclaimed ere she uttered the name that announced it. In the conversation that followed we discovered at once the very romance of nature; for even when the features are concealed, her genius is proclaimed distinctly powerfully.

In *Norma*, when "Adalgisa" imparts to her the name of the seducer who has won her affections, she buries her face in her hands; and through them may be seen the internal struggle—the red blood mantles on her brow—her bosom heaves with the throes of the suppressed anguish—her fingers are spasmodically pressed to her countenance, and when she reveals it, it has assumed the palor of death through the terrible recoil. In *Norma*, as in all her imper-

sonations, is seen the real supremacy of woman, which consists in the delicacy of its expression, in the fragility of the form in which the spirit has its dwelling.

That such intense curiosity should attend every detail regarding an artist of so exalted a nature, is not extraordinary. Lyrical entertainments now possess the highest attractions throughout Europe. There is no city of any considerable area, in any part of the world, which does not possess an opera, even where it lacks all other places of recreation. Can we be, therefore, astonished that such curiosity should exist relative to prima donnas—women combining dramatic genius, with the finest natural vocal powers, and recondite musical science—three properties, even when separate, so valuable and so rare. Jenny Lind possesses not only these claims to admiration, but others, which will be more amply developed in the history of her artistic life, which we will now take up in a more orderly mode of narration.

This most truly original artist was born in 1821, the 6th of October, in Stockholm, where her parents kept a school. There seems to have been nothing in the daily occurrences of her infancy to give an impulse to that love of music which was developed in her at a wonderfully early age. When she was yet only three years old song was her ruling passion—every melody that struck her ear was retained with an accuracy which caused general admiration; no work was done without accompanying it with her clear voice, and no pain, during frequent illness, prevented her from finding consolation in song. Thus Jenny reached her ninth year, precocious in mind and feelings, but by no means in bodily strength or beauty,

when it happened that Mrs. Lundberg, an actress, heard the child sing; and, struck with her pure voice and correct enunciation, strove to open the eyes of her parents to the treasure they possessed, and urged them to devote their child to the stage. Jenny's mother, feeling those prejudices against theatres common among the middle classes, was at first horrified by the idea; but Mrs. Lundberg ultimately conquered them, and the parents at last consented to leave the decision of the matter to their child. The quiet and retiring girl at once declared herself determined to devote herself to the stage. Jenny was conveyed by Mrs. Lundberg to Croelius, a music master, well known in Stockholm. The old man soon became enthusiastic on the abilities of his new pupil; he introduced her to Count Pücke, the manager of the Court Theatre, requested him to hear her, and to take her under his protection. The Count, measuring the gentle, pale little creature with astonished eyes, angrily asked Croelius what he meant to do with such a child, for she surely had nothing to fit her for the stage. Croelius, nothing daunted, insisted upon the Count at least hearing her, adding if he should then not deem her worthy of his favour that he (Croelius) himself would undertake her education on his own account, for that he considered it a sin not to reach forth his hand to talent, where it was so manifestly revealing itself; and so the Count consented at last to listen. Already her voice possessed that heart-searching quality by which the now accomplished artist exercises so irresistible a spell; Count Pücke was overcome; for scarcely had he heard the infant singer when he generously decided that she

should participate in all the advantages of the Ecole, or musical school attached to the Theatre Royal of Stockholm. Shortly after Jenny appeared in children's parts, and excited an enthusiasm similar to that with which Leontine Fay, in her early career, moved all Paris. Vaudevilles were written for the clever little girl, and by her quaint humour, and the lively originality of her performances, she soon became a perfect prodigy. In the following year old Croelius confided his *protegée* to a younger teacher, Herr Berg, a profound musician, who conducted her instruction with an equal zeal, and to whom she is indebted for that solid musical science which forms so sure a basis to her lofty dramatic delineations.

Pursuing her studies unremittingly, borne on by the impetus of applause—ever welcome, from the shrinking modesty of her demeanour, to the most brilliant circles of society, Jenny Lind attained her twelfth year, and here the rosy morning dream of her life became suddenly obscured. Jenny Lind had grown out of her famed children parts, and her youthful form ,was unfit for higher tasks; her charming high notes had vanished; her voice became soundless, and vainly did her worthy master essay to re-awaken the silver tones of his favourite scholar. The hope of forming her for the Grand Opera was banished. Jenny had appeared but rarely in the parts of soubrettes in dramas, and as is usual with precocious prodigies the former impression was soon obliterated.

The child, whose greatest delight was music, bore her fate with resignation. Her musical studies, were, however, pursued with the same assiduity as hitherto. Weber's

Agathe, in *Der Freischutz*, was the ideal of her lyrical ambition. Four years had now elapsed since she had ventured on any new attempt in public. It happened, however, that in a concert, in which the fourth act of Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* was to be performed, a singer for Alice, who has a short solo in this act, was wanting. None could be found for "the insignificant solo," and Herr Berg, remembering his poor pupil, thought that so slight an attempt might be ventured upon. Jenny Lind received her solo with mingled joy and sadness, and commenced her task with a palpitating heart. But, as though by miracle, on the evening of performance the long-missing voice reappeared; the surprised public recognised at once the notes of their former favourite, and the most tumultuous and frenetic applause followed. It is impossible to describe the delight, not unmixed with terror, of the young girl, when Herr Berg, overjoyed, informed her that now she must, without delay, sing the entire part of Agathe. The goal was reached at last; in this character Jenny Lind made her *debût* in the theatre of Stockholm, and with this, her first step, the maiden of sixteen summers placed herself for ever on the pinnacle which she was henceforth to occupy without a rival.

She had, at this period, never acted a tragic part, and had never received instructions for that purpose; at the rehearsals she appeared as though immovable—the actors trembled for the result. It came, and genius asserted its power and supremacy. Jenny Lind, by her fire, carried the lagging orchestra, which had taken the *allegro* too slow, to a quicker *tempo*, and the public, by her acting and singing, to the highest pitch

of enthusiasm. Jenny Lind was at once engaged as prima donna. Yet, while singing opera after opera—and the public would listen to no other vocalist—Jenny Lind and her master were struggling hard to conquer the inflexibility of her voice. Who, while listening enraptured to her now pearly fioriture, would believe that at that period, she could scarcely, with the greatest exertions, achieve the slightest cadence? Her notes, though pure and full, were without elasticity, and failed altogether in the power of the *crescendo;* she was not to be intimidated, but exercised her voice with the patience of the sculptor shaping his marble. Whilst thus persevering in such arduous practice, she interpreted, during eighteen months, "Euryanthe," "Alice," the "Vestal," parts requiring exertions which were most violent for her youth. Still the applause with which she was rewarded made but a deeper impression on her mind that she was not yet worthy of it; that her master had done for her everything in his power, but that the study of great examples and the finishing hand were required to conduct her to that elevation in art which she had ambitioned. Garcia was known to be the first vocal teacher in Europe; the wish of visiting him in Paris ripened to resolution. But how to accomplish it? Where were the means upon which to exist while giving up her engagement and passing one or two years in Paris? She had been accustomed to live in the first circles of society, beloved and honoured by all who knew her; with the true pride of genius she shrunk from seeking assistance, and was resolved to trust to her own strength alone. During the vacation of the theatre she travelled with her father

through the whole of Sweden and Norway, giving concerts at every town, everywhere creating a sensation; and she returned to Stockholm with abundant means to carry out her resolution. Declaring her intention to the directors of the theatre and vindicating her act by unanswerable reasons, the courageous maiden obtained the wished-for leave of absence. Her parents attempted not to dissuade her—they knew their child; firm, decided, silent, and earnest, she followed up her resolutions stedfastly. Her parents knew her purity of mind, the futility of temptation; and so they left her to her fate. Occupied in their avocation, they could not afford to accompany her during this long absence; and so the girl of eighteen, alone, protected only by her firmness, her innocence, and her sacred love for art, journeyed to that capital which had already produced so much greatness, and destroyed so much of the noble and virtuous.

Arrived in Paris, her first visit was to Garcia, to whom she had been provided with introductory letters. It was with the most intense anxiety that she crossed his threshold. She stood now before the master on whose decision she had built her whole futurity. Garcia received her kindly; she sang—he listened to her without signs of approbation or disapprobation; and when she had concluded, he said calmly, "My dear child, you have no voice." A dreadful word for Jenny. "Or," added he, correcting himself, "you have *had* a voice and are just going to lose it. Probably you have been singing too much or too early, for your organ is worn and rugged; I cannot give you any instruction at present. Do not sing a note for three months, and then give me another call." Such was the

comfortless answer of the man upon whom rested all her hopes.

Three months were spent by Jenny Lind in profound solitude ; in that entire loneliness one only learns to feel rightly in such large capitals. "I was living on my tears and the agony of the *mal de pays*," she said once, speaking of her Parisian residence. Nevertheless, nothing could induce her to return without procuring from Garcia another trial. After the lapse of the stipulated time Garcia found that her voice had improved, and that her instructions might commence. At this time Garcia was teaching a countrywoman of Lind's, Madlle. Nissen, who possessed a very powerful, full-toned voice, but no mental abilities. Jenny Lind confesses that it often brought her to despair to hear Garcia hold up that lady to her as an example, whilst she felt that she understood more, and was pursuing loftier aims than would ever be attained by her fellow student. Garcia was wont to say, "If Jenny Lind had the voice of Nissen, or the latter Jenny's intelligence, one of them would become the greatest singer in Europe." Although Jenny used to compose the *cadenzi* and *fiorituri* to the airs she was studying, and Garcia so much approved of them as to copy them, he could never believe that she would ever rise above mediocrity; and she often observes that, next to herself, nobody would be more astonished about her successes than her old master, Garcia. In the following year a Swedish composer was sent to Paris, in order to summon her home, she being painfully missed, both by the public and management at Stockholm. Through this gentleman she became acquainted with the celebrated Meyerbeer, and his well-

practised eye soon recognised the pearl under the modest and unpretending shell. His single doubt was, whether the peculiar charm of the flute-like purity of her delicate voice would sufficiently tell in a large space. He therefore arranged a rehearsal with full orchestra in the *salon* of the Grand Opera, and Jenny Lind sang the three great scenes from *Robert le Diable*, *Norma*, and the *Freischutz*, with such effect that Meyerbeer made her at once offers for Berlin. Her love of home, however, and the word she had pledged drew her back to Stockholm. Received with enthusiasm in her native town, the young girl gave proofs of her successful studies during her absence ; she proved an excellent actress, a perfect mistress of delivery, and the possession of an organ which seemed when most exerted more pure and beautiful. As she had formerly been the favourite at Stockholm, she was now its pride—all participated in her triumphs. The subsequent spring brought Meyerbeer's invitation to assist at the opening of the Opera. It was with grief Jenny thought of again leaving her native place, but she was urged to obey the call of the great master. As deep as her loss was felt in Stockholm, it was, nevertheless, generally acknowledged that Jenny Lind had to attain a European reputation, and that it would be cruel to interrupt her in her glorious career. The invitation was accepted. In August, 1844, she went to Dresden, where Meyerbeer was then writing an opera, in order to arrive at a better understanding with the master, and to acquire the German language. At the request of the management at Stockholm she returned, however, after a month's absence, once more to Sweden, to assist at the coronation of the King. It being now

decided at Stockholm that Jenny Lind was to pass the winter in Berlin, they began to fear her entire loss, and a number of the most wealthy bankers proposed to the young artiste to deposit annually a certain sum for ten years, so that at the expiration of that time she would be in possession of a considerable fortune, if she would consent to bind herself not to leave Stockholm.

Jenny Lind was touched to the heart by this generous proof of the deep interest of her countrymen; but she had given her word, which was sacred. The evening of Jenny's leave-taking was one of universal sorrow; the public wept more than they applauded; it was as though a beloved child was departing. The streets were crowded by thousands on the day of her departure.

She knew then scarcely twenty words of the German language; but after two months' application, all admired the correctness of her pronunciation: such is her quickness of comprehension and facility of retention.

Jenny Lind remained four months in Berlin, during which time the enthusiasm of the public was hourly increasing. Through all the districts of Germany, and far beyond its boundaries, her fame was extending, and soon the managers of London and Paris were outbidding each other to win the northern songstress; but she was obliged to return to Sweden by her previous engagement. She appeared at Berlin in *Norma*, *Sonnambula*, *Camp of Silesia*, and *Fille du Regiment*. The night of her leave-taking was distinguished by marks of approbation such as, perhaps, had never been shown to an artist on that stage. It was not that loud burst of tumultuous applause so frequently offered to musical talent; no, a deep silence

evinced the intense interest. Scarcely had the curtain concealed her from the eyes of the excited public, than one rush was made upon the stage, to bring her forward amidst the most enthusiastic cheers.

Previously to her return to Stockholm, she visited most of the other principal towns of northern Germany, gathering everywhere the same laurels. In Hamburgh, a silver laurel wreath was presented to her on her departure. Her entire journey was a constant triumph.

During the following summer she was called to the festivals on the Rhine, which the King of Prussia was preparing for the sovereign of Great Britain. On this occasion she appeared in Frankfort and Cologne. The Countess Rossi (Henrietta Sontag), pronounced her the first singer of her time.

From November, 1845, till the end of March, 1846, she fulfilled her engagement for five months at the Theatre Royal of Berlin; she then proceeded to Vienna, where she made her *debut* as Norma, on the 22nd of April, in the Theatre An Der Wien, before that public to whom in Germany belongs the final adjudication in matters mnsical. She appeared and conquered!

Her appearance took place in the presence of a crowded house, containing, probably, the whole musical public of Vienna, as well as the Imperial Court. The reports which had preceded her, the exaggerations of the so-called "Lind-enthusiasts," the unprecedentedly high prices of admission, had raised to such a degree the anticipations of the public, that Jenny Lind expressed her doubts of success, and declared that, but

for having given her word, she would not consent to appear. With visible nervousness—with the elevation and dignity of a priestess, but yet with an expression of humbleness—she ascended the Druid tree, and under a silence so hushed, that we almost fancied we heard the many thousand hearts beating in anxiety while the public was awaiting the first sounds of her voice; but scarcely had they resounded, scarcely had the genius of her art become alive within her, than the whole house burst into one cheer decisive of her fate in Vienna.

And with this, her crowning success in the capital of musical Germany, we may fitly end this slight outline of a life affluent of artistic ovations. Her subsequent triumphs, which could add nothing further to her fame, have become matter of general note.

Jenny Lind appears in private life as one of those simple, unpretending persons whose greatest beauty consists in their mental elevation. On the stage she is surrounded with a higher grace; she appears there as the ideal of a grand artistic thought. Her blue eyes are resplendent with a beauty which we do not recognise in the simple girl in her domesticity. But there she is not wanting in attractive grace. She has the fair hair and blue eyes of the daughters of her native land; her figure is somewhat above the middle size.

Her private character is not less beautiful and satisfactory than her artist life. Yet it is hardly necessary to dwell on this; her greatness in art and the susceptibility of her mind for all that is beautiful, noble, or good, are identical. For what elevates her to that

height where art ceases, and becomes ideal nature, is the purity of her deep feelings, and her refined intellectuality. These are the secrets of the wonderful effect of her truthfulness in acting; a striking example of which is related of a singer in the south of Germany, who, while performing "Elvino" to her "Amina," declared that he could not act with her, as he could not approach her with the wrath his part required, much less spurn her from him—the truthfulness of her delineation, the represented agony, having such an effect upon him as to draw forth involuntary tears.

Jenny Lind's character is of the genuine Scandinavian cast—taciturn, earnest, meditative, firm, persevering, faithful, and withal, modest and retiring.

Jenny Lind, as an actress, is quite a new phenomenon. She is entirely original; following her own ideal conceptions, she rises to regions whence, like Schiller's maid, she descends to refresh the heart and soul of her auditors with gifts beautiful and wondrous.

Her individuality entirely disappears in her dramatic assumptions; her whole soul is melted into and vitalises the creations of the poet, while the highest art stamps perfection on her impersonations.

And yet at the commencement of an opera she suffers from a nervousness, which she only masters in the course of performance. This seems to exhibit her truly artistic nature. She has first to give up her whole mind to the character; and how terrible the task thus to bring the deep feelings of her own mind before the public. Hence, ere the performance commences, a shudder passes through her frame; she steps tremblingly

from the wings, and it is only after having timidly sung her first notes, the all-enlivening spirit is evoked.

In conclusion, we may add the following passages of Dr. Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, selected from a letter to Professor Fischhof, in Vienna, which contain an excellent characterisation of our subject. "I have not in my life met with such a noble, genuine, true artist as Jenny Lind; I have nowhere found natural capacity, study, and deep sensibility so perfectly united; and although here or there *one* of these qualities may have appeared much more prominent, I believe the combination of all these to such a degree has yet never occurred." And in another letter to Dr. A. J. Becher, of Vienna, the same master writes:—"She is the best artiste with whom I have become acquainted in my life—the most genuine and noble. She is rather shy and retiring; but when you will have heard from her either a small song or an air you will know more about her than I can tell you."

Continue, then, thou beautiful polar star of the lyrical drama to gladden the heart of man with thy divine gifts of song; and mayest thy intention of departing from the stage give way before the deep interest which thou findest everywhere, in obedience to the words of the German poet—

"Die Kunst, die mir ein Gott gegeben,
Sie werde vieler Tausend Lust!"

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